

My name is Dawn Hemstock, I am a resident of Branford, I am a member of the legislative subcommittee of the nonprofit For Cameron, I am a mental health professional, and I am a mother and grandmother who is concerned about the people of CT.

I support H.B. 5430 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. There is a relentless public health crisis related to opioids that is taking a harsh, deadly toll on people in the State of Connecticut. I would like to highlight the urgent crisis of overdose deaths due to illicit fentanyl. There is an immediate need to raise awareness of illicit fentanyl as a poison being ingested unknowingly by its victims through other substances, especially pressed pills cut with fentanyl by drug dealers to maximize their profit and disguised as Xanax, Adderall, and oxycontin, among others. 2 out of 5 pressed pills seized by the DEA in 2021 were cut with deadly dosages of fentanyl. There were approximately 1250 people who died from overdoses in CT by November 2021. That number is expected to increase for 2022. 85% of those overdose deaths involved fentanyl. We have recently seen how this crisis is affecting our young people, with the overdose death of a 13 year old Connecticut child in his school and 6 spring breakers in Florida experiencing fentanyl overdoses last week. The State of CT has a history and reputation for national leadership around care for its citizens, for example, mitigating the covid pandemic and addressing gun violence. It is imperative that our leadership provide equivalent attention to the deadly opioid / fentanyl crisis. Based on statistical data, 5 Connecticut residents will die from overdose today. The time to implement adequate and effective prevention and treatment measures is NOW.

Thank you for this opportunity.